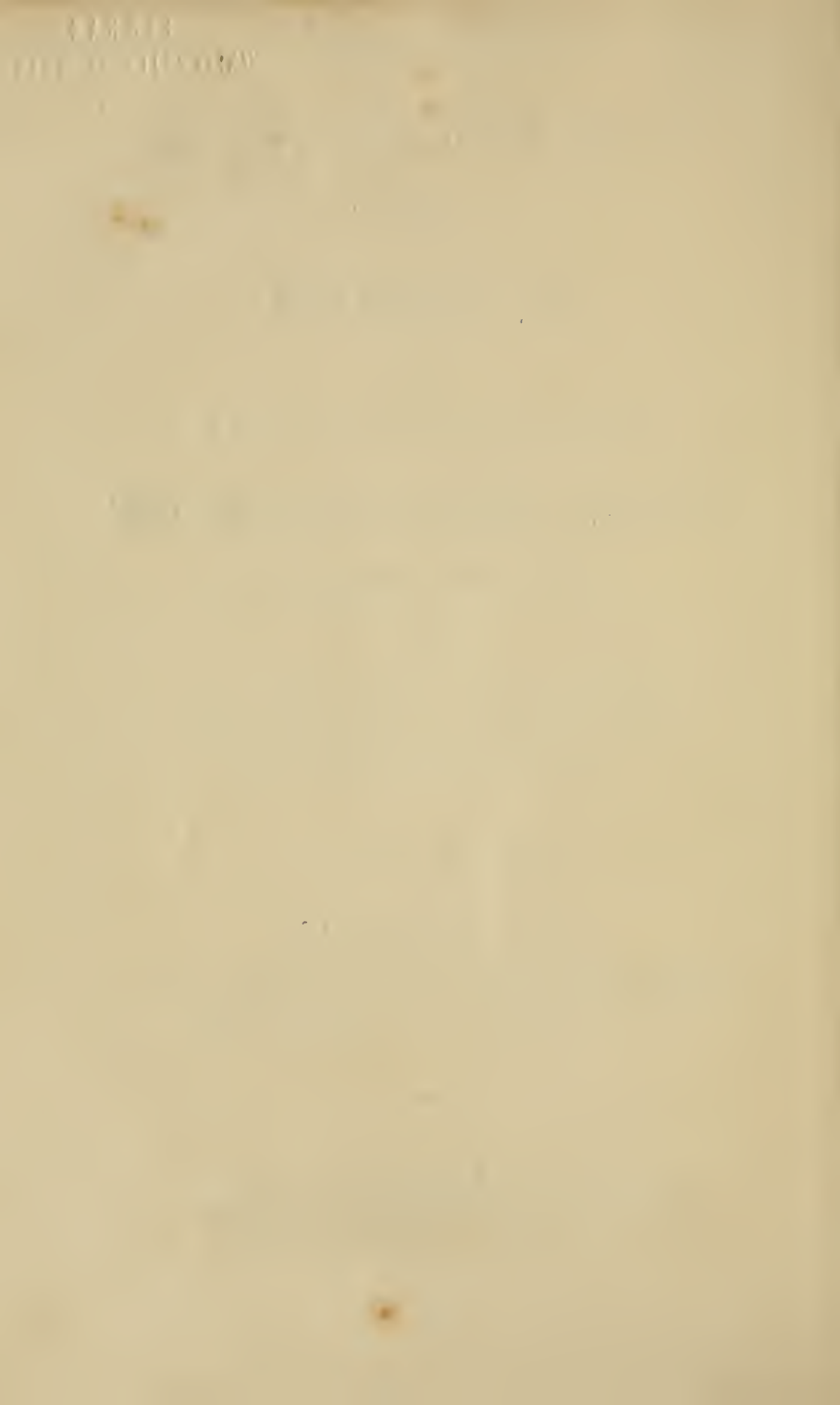




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INWARD LIFE IN OUTWARD TROUBLES.

A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEDICATION

OF THE

CHURCH OF S. MATTHIAS, STOKE NEWINGTON.

JUNE 13TH, 1855.

BY THE REV. T. T. CARTER,

RECTOR OF CLEWER.

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NOTICE.

THIS Sermon, preached on the anniversary of the dedication of the Church of S. Matthias, Stoke Newington, is published with the author's kind permission, in compliance with the earnest request of those who heard it, and is commended to the serious consideration of others. Such deep and earnest thoughts on the great doctrine of the Incarnation, and the important practical conclusions drawn from it, will furnish abundant instruction and consolation to those whose minds are harassed and perplexed by the contradictions and divisions of our day, leading them to higher, more comprehensive views of the Church, which S. Paul declares to be the Body of CHRIST, as well as to a deeper sense of their own privileges, responsibilities and duties as "members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones."

A hearty belief of this great "mystery of godliness" would give men more exalted ideas of the nature of Divine Worship, and dispel those prejudices which many conscientious persons entertain against the solemn ritual of the Church. To meet such objections,

the writer of these remarks had purposed making some observations on Public Worship in general, and on Choral Service in particular, as necessarily connected with this doctrine, but he shrinks from entering into a dissertation which might in some degree draw off the mind of the reader from serious meditation on the subject matter of the Sermon. This important question will perhaps be more fully treated on some other occasion. Those who have the privilege of attending this Church, will need no commendation of Choral Service. The writer would only add the expression of his conviction that no other mode of conducting Divine Worship so fully recognizes the majesty of the great Head of the Church, and so fitly expresses the devout homage of the one Body, as that which he believes to have been appointed by God Himself, sanctioned by the very fullest warrant of Holy Scripture, by the practice of the Church of CHRIST in all ages, and by the Church of England in particular.

STOKE NEWINGTON,

August, 1855.

A SERMON.

S. JOHN XV. PART OF VERSE 5.

“I AM THE VINE, YE ARE THE BRANCHES.”

IN these brief words, our LORD represents the progress and perfecting of His Incarnation. He selects an image from the natural world to express the mystery more vividly than would be possible in mere words. Formed of earthly materials, growing and spreading by a continual increase of the same materials, through the power of its inward life, which is nourished from above, by the sunlight and flow of dew and rain from heaven,—such is the nature of a tree. The root, the stem, the branches, are realities of a living world, and they are used by our LORD to shadow out realities as substantial in the world of grace. The union of a divine and earthly life, incorporated in His own person, thence to spread over the earth, absorbing into itself the creature whom He would redeem, is the truth thus conveyed by our LORD. He describes the wonderful reconciliation and union of the invisible Deity and the visible nature of man; the invisible Deity inhabiting, penetrating, pervading, enfolding the nature of man, and man instinct and breathing with hidden Deity. The Incarnation is here viewed in its full de-

velopment, in the utmost reach of its consequences and effects. The perfected tree implies a perfected Humanity. The whole course of the mystery, from the Conception within the Blessed Virgin's womb to the fulness of the Body of CHRIST, as It will appear in Heaven in the completeness of every member, rises up before us.

There are two different aspects under which the mystery is here presented to us ; or rather, there are two stages of its progress. First, in our LORD Himself, as distinct from His Church. From the period of His Conception till His Ascension, the Divine Humanity was limited to His own Person. He alone was, during that period, the Vine. Into His own single Person He assumed the complete Manhood, and fulfilled all the functions of our created nature. As yet His life had not passed beyond Himself. It is true that the *power* of His Divine Humanity had been extended, and become a source of healing : once it is expressly written, that " virtue had gone out of Him."¹ But His actual life—His substance—had not as yet been imparted to any, nor had He taken others into Himself. It is true, also, that as in Adam there were the germs of the whole race of man, to spring thenceforward out of his loins, and as in a true sense we lived in Adam, and were involved in all his acts, so in a true sense the germs of the whole redeemed race—the many members yet unborn—lay as an undeveloped substance within the Humanity of our LORD, and in Him lived, though visible only to His Eye Who sees the end in the beginning. But He was as yet the Vine, without the Branches. He was then seen alone, separate from His brethren, as the perfect Standard,

¹ S. Mark v. 30.

the Pattern and complete Image of the regenerate life of restored man.

From the time of our LORD's Ascension, the scene changes. Thenceforward the second stage of the mystery opens before us. Gradually there is revealed to human eyes what was contained in germ in His own Person. The members of His sacred Body are developed. The expanding branches of the True Vine are seen growing and forming through the power of the New Birth into His likeness. He is now seen imparting His Divine Manhood to the Communion of His Elect. He multiplies Himself. The Vine spreads. He diffuses His own wondrous life throughout the ever-increasing community of the Baptized. They have become His members. The Church is now "His Body; the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."¹ It is no longer CHRIST alone, but CHRIST in us, and we in CHRIST. The Church is mystically a reproduction of Himself. As He was in the world, visible to mortal eye, so now His Church is in the world. It is still Himself revealed. The limits of His Body now are coextensive with the vast company, part of which are gathered within the veil; part are still struggling through the coil of this present distress; part are yet within the womb, to be grafted in in due time.

What our LORD represents under the symbol of the Vine, S. Paul represents under the symbol of a temple. "In Whom all the building, fitly framed together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, groweth into a holy temple in the LORD, in Whom we are builded together for an habitation of God through the SPIRIT."² The stones constitute the developed

¹ Ephes. i. 23.

² Ephes. ii. 21.

temple, as the branches the developed Vine. Still more literal does S. Paul's language become when he speaks of an actual body, and describes how we "grow up into Him in all things, Which is the Head, even CHRIST, from Whom the whole Body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body."¹ Or again, this great truth is more concisely expressed, "For by one SPIRIT we are all baptized into one Body."²

Such, then, is the perfected Humanity of the SON of GOD. CHRIST and His Church are made one Being; one coexistent frame. Each of His faithful ones is to be viewed as no longer having a separate existence in himself, but as a very part of his LORD, through whom He acts; an organ through which He pours His life. And the Communion of the Elect form one connected substance,—one whole; one body having one heart beating with its many pulses. Even the very outward elements of our nature are not divided from Him, according to S. Paul's wonderful announcement, that we are "members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones."³

As there are thus two periods or stages of existence under which the Incarnation and its effects are to be viewed, so our LORD's intercession for the perfection of His Humanity was twofold. His intercession arises first for Himself, in His own separate Person. "And now, FATHER, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."⁴ The fount and centre of life must first be per-

¹ Ephes. iv. 15.

² 1 Cor. xii. 13.

³ Ephes. v. 30.

⁴ S. John xvii. 5.

fectured, and next the streams of life flowing forth into the expanding body of members who were to be incorporated and made one with Him. The second petition then rises for His many members. "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."¹ "That they all may be one, as Thou, FATHER, art in Me, and I in Thee ; that they also may be one in Us."² The glory of the extended Body of the Church follows the glory of its LORD,—flows from it, and is part of it. First His own separate Person is made perfect, and thence the Church, which is His fulness.

Let us now endeavour to draw from this great truth some of its practical conclusions, and we shall find, specially in the Church's troubled state, that it furnishes many grounds of consolation.

1. We here learn the perfectness of the sympathy that exists between the LORD and His faithful ones, even on earth. This sympathy is perfect even in our humiliations. The wound upon the utmost spray is felt in the tree's hidden life. The communications are imperceptible to the outward eye, but they exist through the sensitiveness and mutual relations of the several organs. This truth indeed follows from the very necessity of the case, for how could there be sympathy with us at all on earth, if there were not sympathy with humiliation? For what else can the Church's earthly state be, but a humbled one? The humiliations of the Son of Man were not limited to those few years He passed in Galilee or Jerusalem. The serpent was to bruise all the seed. His humiliations are continued in His present earthly body. The unbelief of Capernaum,—the shame of the judgment hall,—

¹ S. John xvii. 19.

² S. John xvii. 21.

the betrayal of Judas,—the wounds of Calvary, are perpetuated in the coldness which is around us,—in the blasphemies of the multitude,—in the opposition, the distrust, the calumny, the piercings of heart, and rending of ties and treachery of friends, which are now as in the beginning. They still reach Him through His members. He still suffers in them; still bears shame through them before the world. What the Prophets of old declared for the consolation of Israel, strong as the language is, could be but a type of what exists now. “In all their affliction,” says Isaiah, “He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them.”¹ And again, Zechariah, “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.”² For how much more must this be the case now when He is incarnate in the Body of His Church, when there is the contact of the same nature, when there is a very corporal unity? S. Paul’s words of himself are not spoken of himself only. He speaks as one of many. He is bearing what is common to all the faithful. “I bear in my body the marks of the LORD JESUS.”³ And again, “I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of CHRIST in my flesh for His Body’s sake, which is the Church.”⁴ Are we not then losing the consciousness of His Presence, and believing ourselves and the Church as something separate from our LORD, when we are vexed, or irritated, or depressed, as for ourselves, at the contradictions and hindrances which beset us? Should not all such personal feelings be lost in the absorbing sense of *His* humiliation, *His* pain? If the Church be now shorn of its beauty, what is it but a continuance of the state He visibly

¹ Isaiah lxiii. 9.

² Zech. xi. 8.

³ Gal. vi. 17.

⁴ Col. i. 24.

bore, Whose "visage was so marred more than any man?"¹ If we fail in our efforts again and again, is it not a renewal of His sorrow, Who "did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief?"² If we cannot utter all our message, or put forth all our powers, is it not still the same as when He had "many things to say unto them, but ye cannot bear them now?"³ Are these things a cause of marvelling? Are they not rather a manifest portion of our suffering here with Him, our mark of likeness? Is it not His grief and shame, as well as ours? If He bear it century after century in long-suffering silence, may not we, for our brief and fitful span of life, unworthy as we are to be accounted His, still less to suffer with Him, learn to "possess our souls in patience?"

2. Secondly, our LORD's words imply the truest and deepest ground of the Church's unity. The life of a tree, as of a body, of necessity implies unity. If a body be disorganized, the communications of life cease; it is no longer a body. Nor, again, can two bodies have one and the same life. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling."⁴ But the unity of a body, as of a tree, is twofold. There is the unity between the head and its members, or the trunk and its branches, and there is the unity between the members, or the branches, one with another. And the image of the tree teaches us that the former unity preponderates and overrules the latter. The life of the tree does not of necessity pass from branch to branch, but from the root and stem to each branch in order. The whole life of the tree is, in truth, living in each separate branch through its

¹ Isaiah lii. 14.

² S. Matt. xiii. 58.

³ S. John xvi. 12.

⁴ Ephes. iv. 4.

own distinct organization. The sympathies of the several parts, and all mutual co-operation, may cease, while yet the branches live in unity with the central source of life. It is through their common grafting into the same centre of unity that they are one; not through their intercommunion one with another. This one unity alone therefore is essential to life; the other unity is essential only to harmonious and healthful action. The loss of the latter is a loss unspeakably great, but is not a loss of life. Nor is it indeed an entire loss of unity even between the discordant members themselves, for all are still one through their common communications with the same centre of life. An unconscious unity at the heart is still preserved.

Here lies the solution of one of our greatest difficulties. The state of loss under which the separate portions of CHRIST's Body lie at this present hour, and from which each one suffers,—hampered as it is in its movements, marred and imperfect in its forms,—arises from the fact, that life does not flow freely from one to the other; the one does not minister to the other's wants, love and mutual intercession are lost. But nevertheless the unity of life is sustained, because each member still clings to its head, because CHRIST is present in each, and His immediate Presence underlies all other principles of unity. CHRIST lives in each of His members, even though they are become aliens one to another, as the love of a parent may equally embrace all his children though they are living at variance with each other. Thus the life of the East is sustained through communion with the LORD, though at variance with the West. Thus the West lives through communion with the same LORD, though separated from the East. Thus the heart of England

still beats with the pulse of life that flows from the Heart of JESUS, the central life of the Catholic world, though intercommunion with our brethren of the West be suspended.

Where there are the same sacraments of grace, and the same anointed instruments, there must of necessity be the same Divine Presence, and with that Presence the same life. Our preservation of unity rests on the great spiritual law, that where there exists the apostolical succession of the priesthood, and the true sacraments, there are the "joints and bands" through which life passes; there we have CHRIST, and in CHRIST we have all things. What need we more for life, though more we need for health and perfection? What more can others have for their hidden life, and they suffer by the disunion even as we? We without them can never be made perfect, nor they without us. Nor is the loss ours only, or theirs only. It is the loss of the LORD also. His Body is marred. His life cannot spread in its fulness. The travail of His soul cannot be satisfied till all the separate members are united, not with Himself only, but one with another in Himself. His prayer is unanswered. His intercession before the Eternal Throne, as He still pleads His all-availing Sacrifice, ceases not, nor can His soul rest, till His words shall be fulfilled; and His words are, "*that they all* may be one," not He only in them, but they all one, "as Thou, FATHER, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us," "that they may be made perfect in one."¹

¹ S. John xvii. 21—23. It seems scarcely possible to read thoughtfully this intercessory prayer, on the efficacy of which day after day the life of the Catholic Church hangs, without being convinced that the real vital unity of the Church is in its union with

3. Again, our LORD's words imply the power of perpetual increase and revival through the Church's hidden life. The Vine is ever putting forth fresh branches; and "every branch in Me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." Here we may appeal to our own experience. After the long night of the last century, stretching its baneful shadow into the present, what have our own eyes seen? Where does history tell of a truer and deeper spring of life, than the last twenty years in England exhibit? Could a sect be rekindled with such power, and reassume so much of its earlier love? What but the rod of the true Priestly Vine ever so budded and blossomed? When has there been seen in Christendom a more powerful stirring of the hidden life, which in so short a space has spread so widely, and wrought such works? And it was a stirring of life from within itself. It was not caught from abroad. It was not stimulated by the state. It arose simply from a reviving consciousness of its own unearthly mission. It was while oppressed by the state, and through the very occasion of state oppression, and when there existed no communication with

Him Who offers it. The highest unity is that between the FATHER and the SON. "Thou, FATHER, in Me, and I in Thee." The law of unity thence descends and embraces the Church. "That they may be one, even as We are." And the ground of it, "I in them, and Thou in Me." These two ideas run through the entire prayer. There is no intermediate ground of unity between the FATHER and the SON. There is none between the SON and the several branches of the Church, which is His fulness. A line of argument and a catena of authorities might be adduced in confirmation of such a belief, but are not the words of our LORD enough? The xviith chapter of S. John is the truest comment upon the text in this point of view.

the churches of the continent, the movement of life began. It was the Branch of the LORD's own planting springing freshly again from its own inherent and undying power.

A voice spake, and the heart of this great people was stirred. Could we expect that it should be universally received? Can we wonder that the principles revived should have been, as His Word, when it came from His own lips, was in the beginning, "a savour of life unto life," only unto some, "a savour of death unto death,"¹ alas, to many. And though we have not obtained all we justly claim, nor can put forth, as we yearn to do, all the powers that we feel within us, yet have we not more than we have deserved, and more than we have yet learned to use aright?

In this spreading of the sacred Vine in England, one precious outgrowth of life has been manifested here. This noble temple, its daily worship, its more than weekly sacrifice, its unbought services, its solemn music, its brotherhoods,—a work thus rapidly growing, against opposing forces, amidst such jealousies and fears, in a new soil; tried even in its infancy by desertion, desertion of those who should have been its chief stay, and yet flourishing more than at the beginning, its annual festival celebrated now with more than former devotion and care,—what a marvellous testimony does it give of the power that worketh in us, and how hearts will gather round each centre of true Catholic life? It is as some green spray upon the utmost bough showing all the vigour and richness of the stately tree, and His blessing Who planted it.

4. There is one truth more conveyed by these words of our LORD, which in conclusion I would urge.

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 16.

They teach us the most awful motive to sanctity. It has been shown that each one of CHRIST's elect is taken into Himself by the law of the New Birth, and becomes a member of His Body; that by this very fact he no longer lives unto himself, no longer has a separate existence, no longer can act alone, but is become an organ of the Humanity of the SON of GOD, has within him the divine life intermingled with the natural life, and lives in CHRIST and CHRIST in him. "Ye are not your own." Even our very members are become His. Our mental attributes, our bodily organs, are become CHRIST's own instruments and members. It is no longer my own hand, or my own tongue, or my own eye. They are God's. It is His hand, His tongue, His eye. The awful appeal of the Apostle is not applicable to one case only. Its solemn warning spreads over our entire frame. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of CHRIST? Shall I then take the members of CHRIST, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid."¹

We rise to the dignity of our regenerate life, and aim at an adequate purity, only as we realize the results of the Incarnation in ourselves, and feel that CHRIST Him-

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 15. The following striking words were in the author's mind, and he acknowledges his deep obligation to the writer of them:—"It seems a trifle to all but earnest believers, to give way to bad thoughts, to take sinful liberties with your eye or hand; but what says the Scripture? Your eyes and your hands are members of CHRIST; shall I then take CHRIST's Eye and Hand, (O horrible) and make an unclean use of it? Indeed we shall never understand how grievous are our sins against purity, until we have learned to believe in deed, that we are members of CHRIST ourselves, nor against charity, until we believe that our brethren are so."—Rev. J. Keble's Sermon, preached at S. Saviour's, Leeds. "The Last Judgment," p. 86.

self is mystically incarnate in our members. How awful to think that when we sin, we do in some mysterious, yet most real, way, pollute not ourselves only, but Him Who dwelleth in us! We know how even a profane man shrinks back from touching the sacramental elements with hands and lips unprepared. What ought to be the grief of the man, who feels himself to be the consecrated shrine of a most real Presence, if he give way to an unguarded act, or irreverent word! How terrible any desecration, when every touch of renewed evil causes those dreadful wounds of His suffering Humanity to bleed afresh! What anguish to such a man should be the thought, that he has again, in some deep mystical reality, "made Him" to be sin "Who knew no sin," even in his own person!

It is not merely as light enters into an impure body of water and pervades it, that His Presence pervades us. There is between light and water no community of substance, no identity of being. They are diverse elements, mingling without uniting. It is not so in our case. We are made one substance with CHRIST. By a community of Being we are taken into Himself. His life flows through ours, and combines with it. He acts in our acting, speaks in our speech, is "touched with the feeling of all our infirmities." He took our corrupted nature into Himself to cleanse it, and now He gives it back to each one of us, the same nature though purified. Thus Himself combining with us, there arises a true unity of life, and, as in a tree, we cannot distinguish between the hidden life and its visible organs. The decay of the branch evil affects the tree, as its greenness tends to its health. We are, as far as it is possible for us,

taking Himself to sin with, and bringing His Presence into very contact with impurity, when we sin. What must be even the unavoidable imperfections of the Saint to Him Who is all Holy! Should not such thoughts be a check against the cravings of any sinful indulgence! How sustaining in the hour of temptation! How bitter in the remorseful recollections of our sin!

The same truth that should cause our constant fear, and may become our heaviest condemnation, is at the same time our ever abiding spring of hope. As His Presence alone can fully teach us, how great is our sin, so It alone can give any sufficient stay to our renewed efforts. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness."¹ "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."² "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."³ "For it is God Which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."⁴ We have but to will a better course and it is done. And the will itself is not our own. But through our will and through our acting, the Divine Presence wills and does what we will and do. We have but to put forth the power which is already within us.

The powers of our life are the goings forth of Him Who is from everlasting. Our renewal and our revival is His Presence. Every effort we make is instinct with the living energy of the Divine Nature. As in a tree, all its powers, all the organs of its inmost heart, pour their flood of life, to invigorate and sustain the remotest spray of the farthest branch, so

¹ S. John i. 4.

² S. John i. 16.

³ 2 Cor. iv. 7.

⁴ Phil. ii. 13.

likewise, by a mystery of incomprehensible love, all Heaven, the powers of the all-pervading SPIRIT, upholds and quickens each one that trusteth in Him, of all whom He hath drawn and assimilated to Himself by the virtues of His Cross and Passion. May the full results of the Intercession of the Lamb of God Who is in the midst of the Throne, which never ceases, sustaining and advancing in us the life which He hath given us, be day by day, perfected in us. “Holy FATHER, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me,” “that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”¹

¹ S. John xvii. 11, 26.

